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## **Bericht des Zwölferkomitees der "Modern Language Association of America."**

(Für die Pädagogischen Monatshefte.)

Von **W. H. Rosenstengel**, Madison, Wis.

Nach einer längeren Einleitung bespricht der Ausschuss den Wert der modernen Sprachen "in secondary education". Wir heben nur die Hauptpunkte hervor.\*

The study of French and German is profitable as an introduction to the life and literature of France and Germany; as a preparation for intellectual pursuits that require the ability to read French and German for information; and as the foundation of an accomplishment that may become useful in business and travel. General disciplinary value: The study of a language other than the mother tongue requires the learner to compare and discriminate, thus training the analytic and reflective faculties. The effort to express himself in the unfamiliar idiom, to translate from it into his own, makes him attentive to the meaning of words, gives a new insight into the possible resources of expression, and cultivates precision of thought and statement. Incidentally the memory is strengthened and the power of steady application developed. In time such study opens the gate to a new literature, thus liberalizing the mind and giving an ampler outlook upon life. Through literature the student is made a partaker in the intellectual life of other times and other peoples. He becomes familiar with their manners and customs, their ideals and institutions, their mistakes and failures, and with artistic forms in which the national genius has expressed itself. When he leaves school, such knowledge not only enriches his personal life, but makes him a more useful, because a more intelligent, member of society. It exerts a steadying, sanative influence, for it furnishes him with standards based upon the best performance of the race everywhere. For us Americans, with our large confidence in our own ways and destiny, there is special need of the wisdom that comes from familiarity with the life, literature, and history of the great makers of European civilization. The committee is of the opinion that the best course of study for the secondary school will always provide instruction in at least one ancient and one modern language. We ask for the modern language in school and college nothing more than a fair chance to show what they are worth. We believe that they are worth, when properly taught, no less than the ancient languages.

Linguistic discipline and literary culture: The ability to read French and German has also another value not directly connected with the study of belles-lettres. In nearly all branches of knowledge at the present time a large part of the best that has been written is to be found in the German and French languages. One who wishes to study anything thoroughly, no matter what, finds it highly convenient, if not absolutely necessary, to be

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\* Der Teil des Berichtes, der sich auf die "primary grades" bezieht, wird besonders besprochen werden. D. R.

able to read these languages in the pursuits of information. The high-school graduate who brings this ability with him to college has a great advantage in that he can at once begin to use it as a tool in prosecuting his studies. Of those who do not go to college it is fair to presume that a considerable portion will continue some line of private study, if not as a vocation, then as an avocation. For all such the ability to read French and German will be of great service.

Practical value: The practical command of a foreign language has a potential value, but it should be regarded as of subordinate importance, as auxiliary to the higher ends of linguistic and literary culture. The process of learning to speak a foreign language has no educational value except as it is connected with, and grows out of, the improvement of the mind.

Critical review of methods of teaching. The grammar-method has certain undeniable advantages. It trains the mnemonic faculty; it forms one of the best possible exercises in close reasoning. But it neglects the broadening of the mind through contact with the life, the ideas, and the forms of thought and expression of different times and countries, and the cultivation of the artistic sense by the appreciative study of literary masterpieces. It is not calculated to inspire interest in pupils of the high-school age. The day of the pure grammar-method is past, but it had its good features. — The natural method is based on two general ideas; one false, namely that a boy or man can best learn a new language in the manner in which an infant first acquires its native speech. It provides little discipline for the intelligence; it affords only the poorest kind of mnemonic training; it favors vagueness of thought and imprecision of expression and it sacrifices the artistic interest of language-study to a so-called "practical" one. It seems probable that the next generation will regard "naturalism" rather as a vivifying influence than as an independent method. — The psychological method rests on the principle of the association of ideas and the habit of "mental visualization". Every lesson is first worked out orally and then studied by the pupil from his book. On presenting each new word to the beginner the instructor exhorts him to close his eyes and form a distinct mental picture of the thing or act represented. This image (it is affirmed) will remain indissolubly connected with the word, and the evocation of the one will always recall the other. This method trains the memory, fascinates the student and holds his attention closely; it gives him, in a reasonably short time, a ready command over a large, well-arranged, and well-digested vocabulary; it affords an insight into the life of a foreign country. But it affords but little opportunity for the exercise of judgment; it entirely neglects, in the first years, the cultivation of the aesthetic sense, and assigns literary study to a stage which high-school pupils will scarcely ever reach. — The phonetic method lacks the logical discipline of the old grammatical instruction, is more successful than any other in forming a good pronunciation, and in giving pupils a ready and accurate control of the spoken language. But it overlooks the importance of literary education. — The reading method quickly enables the student to read...with the same kind of intelligence and enjoyment with which good classical scholars read Latin, but it is lacking in vivacity and in stimulus to the attention; it interests only the more serious pupils.

Method as related to the preparation of teachers. To be *ideally* prepared for giving instruction even in a secondary school (Hochschule), one should have practical command of the language to be taught, a solid know-

ledge of its literature and a first-hand acquaintance with the foreign life of which the literature is the reflection. To be *decently* prepared, he should at least, have read so much in the recent literature of the language, that he can read about as easily as he would read matter of the same kind in English. He should have studied the principal words of the great writers, and should have taken a course in the general history of the literature. He should know thoroughly the grammar of the language in its present form. He should be able to pronounce the language intelligently and with reasonable accuracy, to write a letter or a short essay in the language without making gross mistakes in grammar or idiom, to carry on an ordinary conversation in the language without a sense of painful embarrassment. The residence *abroad* is greatly to be desired.

Trotz der Einwendungen, die gegen diesen Teil des Berichtes mit Recht gemacht werden können, muss doch anerkannt werden, dass die Arbeit des Ausschusses bei weitem die beste ist, die in diesem Lande über den fremdsprachlichen Unterricht veröffentlicht worden ist. Auch die deutschamerikanischen Lehrer haben alle Ursache, dem Ausschuss für seine treffliche Arbeit grosse Anerkennung und hohes Lob zu zollen.

Es sei mir gestattet, auf einige wenige Punkte aufmerksam zu machen. Meiner Ansicht nach hätte der Ausschuss statt „wenigstens eine klassische und eine moderne Sprache“ empfehlen müssen: Für die *Modern Classical* und *General Science Courses* 4 Jahre Deutsch, 2 Jahre Französisch und Latein als Wahlfach; für den *Ancient Classical Course* 4 Jahre Latein, 2 Jahre Griechisch und Deutsch als Wahlfach. Eine nähere Begründung dieser Empfehlung wäre nicht schwer gewesen.

Der Ausschuss legt zu wenig Gewicht auf Sprechübungen. Nur der Schüler versteht die Fremdsprache, der sie mit einiger Fertigkeit zu sprechen weiss. Dieses Ziel auch nur annähernd zu erreichen, war uns bis jetzt nicht möglich, weil uns die Zeit für den fremdsprachlichen Unterricht zu kurz zugemessen wurde, und weil die Klassen zu stark besetzt waren. Aber die Vorbedingungen zu diesem Ziele zu schaffen, unsere Schüler wenigstens ein gut Stück auf den Weg zu führen, das können und sollten wir. „Wer in Frankreich Französisch lernt, der hat Personen und Handlungen vor Augen; er errät leicht, was ihn angeht; die Apperzeption geschieht gewiss durch frei steigende Vorstellungen, mit denen sich die Sprache kompliziert, und bald wird die Sprache selbst zur Apperzeption und zum Einschalten bereit sein.“ Diese geistvolle psychologische Beobachtung Herbarts sollten wir bei unseren Sprachübungen nicht aus den Augen lassen.

Die Anforderungen, die der Ausschuss an die Lehrbefähigung stellt, sind zu hoch. (Ein Streber verlangte sogar in einer deutscham. Zeitung, dass die Lehrer an Hochschulen, die Deutsch lehren, „die deutsche Sprache zum Gegenstand gründlichster, wissenschaftl. Studien“ gemacht haben sollten.) Die preussische Regierung z. B. erachtet „die Befähigung, das Englische in den mittleren Klassen (höherer Schulen) zu

lehren, als nachgewiesen, wenn der Kandidat eine im ganzen korrekte Übersetzung eines nicht zu schwierigen deutschen Textes in das Englische als schriftliche Klausurarbeit geliefert und in der mündlichen Prüfung dargethan hat, dass er mit richtiger, zu fester Gewöhnung gebrachter Aussprache eine sichere Kenntnis der grammatischen Regeln und des für den Unterricht unentbehrlichen Wortschatzes, auch der wichtigeren feststehenden Thatsachen von Synonymik verbindet. Von dem Entwicklungsgange der neueren englischen Litteratur muss er eine Übersicht gewonnen und einige Werke hervorragender Schriftsteller, soweit sie im Bereiche der Schullektüre liegen, mit eingehendem Verständnisse gelesen haben. Mit den wesentlichen Regeln des neuenglischen Versbaues und Reims muss der Kandidat bekannt sein, auch im mündlichen Gebrauch der Sprache einige Fertigkeit erworben haben.“ In anderen deutschen Staaten, in Frankreich und in Skandinavien wird ähnliches gefordert. Und das sollte vor der Hand auch hier genügen. Einen wichtigen Grundsatz aber lässt der Ausschuss ganz ausser Acht, und das ist der, dass das Lehren eine Kunst ist, die der Lehrer des fremdsprachlichen Unterrichts sich angeeignet haben muss, um mit Erfolg wirken zu können.

Der zweite Teil des Berichtes wird in der nächsten Nummer etwas ausführlicher besprochen werden.